

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE HONORABLE MINISTER RONNIE
KASRILS AT THE OPENING OF THE EBENHAESER BALANCING
DAM IN EBENHAESER ON 24 NOVEMBER 2003

MOLWENI, GOEIE MORE, GOOD MORNING.

Your worship the Mayor of Matzikama, The Honourable Ministers
Gelderblom and Witbooi, Members of the Portfolio Committee on
Water Affairs and Forestry including the chairperson, members of the
community, farmers, members of my staff - I welcome you all to this
auspicious occasion today. (Ek verwelkom u een en almal by
hierdie spesiale geleentheid.)

BACKGROUND ON OLIFANTS RIVER

This is an area with a rich and vibrant history, redolent of the diverse
nature of our society. The river on which this dam has been built, the
Olifants River, is the second largest river catchment in South Africa. It
is exceeded in size only by the Orange river. Long before the settlers
arrived in this part of the world, the river was known by the local

Deleted: m

Deleted: Vredendal and Lutzville

Deleted: H

Deleted: E

Deleted: c

Deleted: and fellow comrades

Formatted

Deleted: ¶

Formatted

Formatted

Deleted: I have been told that Vredendal is one of the fastest growing towns in this Province. Flying in from Cape Town I could see the Clanwilliam dam built in 1932, the Bu

Deleted: oe

Deleted: Ishoek barrage built in 1919 and the canal system bringing water to Vredendal. The dam wall of the Clanwilliam Dam was raised in 1966.

Deleted: All of these impoundments are on the Olifants river.

Deleted: ¶
¶
Let me tell you about this

Deleted: . It

Deleted: that of the

Deleted: R

Deleted: T

Deleted: Olifants R

Deleted: first

people as the Tharakkama River, meaning the 'Bushy River'. In due course we may have to rename this river the Tharakkama River to honour the Soaqua people.

Deleted: indigenous

Deleted: river

Deleted: W

The Soaqua, indigenous people of the South Western Cape, used to migrate seasonally between the coast at St Helena Bay and the Olifants River. The the protein rich marine resources in this estuary sustained them during the winter months and they migrated to the permanent waters in the Cedarberg during summer.

Deleted: the Soaqua,

Deleted: migrated

Deleted: to and from

Deleted: between

Deleted: Soaqua people consumed

The many late Stone Age sites in this area bear testament to this rich human heritage of this corner of South Africa. So we are gathering on grounds on which people have been gathering for many, many years.

Deleted: In this vicinity there are many

Deleted: two

Deleted: stone age

Deleted: sites which

Deleted: , which is of great interest.

Deleted: these

Deleted: grounds which

Deleted: ,

Deleted: many

Deleted: on

Deleted: ago

Deleted: The river got its later name from

Deleted: who on

Deleted: ,

Deleted: its

After the white settlers had arrived in this neck of the woods, one Jan Danckaert, seeing a herd of elephants, two to three hundred strong on the banks of the river in the vicinity of Clanwilliam, named it the Olifants River.

Since then, much has been done to ensure a regular supply of water for development in this area. Flying in from Cape Town I could see

Deleted: 99

the Clanwilliam dam built in 1932, the Bulshoek barrage built in 1919 and the canal system bringing water to Vredendal. In 1966 the wall of the Clanwilliam Dam was raised to make more water available. This water infrastructure has no doubt contributed to the fact that Vredendal is currently one of the fastest growing towns in this Province.

WATER REFORM

While there is a great deal of development occurring in the Vredendal area, we cannot ignore the inequities still hanging on from the apartheid era. Most of the current irrigation farmers are white. The coloured and black communities were deprived by deliberate design of the apartheid regime. The local communities of indigenous descent were cruelly deprived of the chance of a decent livelihood. I see that this is set to change for the better, and change it must.

The irrigation farmers have done well with the water my department brought to this place. This canal scheme gave rise to what is now Vredendal. The future of Vredendal must now be to empower the

Formatted

Deleted: ¶

Formatted

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: It is unfortunate that, m

Deleted: if not all

Deleted: se

Deleted: from the white

Deleted: communities

Deleted: We know that t

Deleted: T

Deleted:

Deleted: so called

Deleted: so-called

Deleted: '

Deleted: '

Deleted: '

Deleted: african

Deleted: African'

Deleted: have been deprived

Deleted: by

Deleted: past

Deleted: have been

Deleted: a

Deleted:

Deleted: has

Deleted: you now call

Deleted: 9¶

previously deprived communities. They must now be given the opportunity to share in the wealth of this area.

Deleted: create

Deleted: for

As you will by now know that we have transformed our Water Law by promulgating the National Water Act in 19~~9~~8.

Deleted:

Deleted: 8

The new legislation sets us on a path of working together, white and black, women and men, to create wealth by using the precious water flowing through this area. I will want to talk a little more about this a little later on. We must, as a nation, find the ways to use our water efficiently, equitably and sustainably. The notion of equity requires us to create optimal opportunities for our previously disadvantaged communities of this area. In this way prosperity of the previously disadvantaged can be enhanced, creating wealth for the communities around Vredendal.

Deleted: It is about

Deleted: holding hands firmly

Deleted: all of us

Deleted: pass our lands

Deleted: ¶

¶ This means that any person or persons wanting to use water must show me that they would be utilising the water

Deleted: ??

Deleted: optimally

Deleted: A fine example is this

Deleted: e

Deleted: balancing dam that goes a long way in showing us what optimal use of water is about.

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: ¶ In this way we are introducing the optimal use of water. By optimal use we don't just mean delivering water to commercial farmers, but also

Formatted

Deleted: ing

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: it is a torch-bearer for the rest of the country in the sense that

Deleted: 9¶

LOWER OLIFANTS RIVER WUA (LORWUA)

I want to recognise that significant progress has been made in implementing the new Water Act in the Vredendal area. In fact the Vredendal Irrigation Board was the first Irrigation Board to be

transformed into a Water User Association. Under this guise, we are in the process of transferring the management of the irrigation scheme to the Water User Association. This process has not been without its pain.

Earlier this year I had to intervene after one of the water user association workers had a chain padlocked around his arm. While it may have been insensitively laughed off as a joke by the perpetrators and I don't buy that lame excuse, it was clear evidence to me of the racist attitudes that still pertained here. I doubt very much whether the same actions would have been taken by management if he had been a white man.

Deleted: intended

I would wish to believe that most of the people of Vredendal are committed to making democratic South Africa successful and prosperous. I would wish to believe that all, regardless of colour, are similarly patriotic and dedicated. What I do know, however, is that each one of us has to take strong measures to rid ourselves of the racial baggage that we carry with us out of our apartheid past.

Deleted: have no doubt

Deleted: have no reason to doubt the patriotism and dedication of the people of this area, black and white

Deleted: 9%

I will be meeting with the management committee and workers of the Lower Orange River Water User Association later on to discuss how we can work with them to ensure that they move away from the apartheid past and help to establish a working environment in which all people are fairly represented and respected, regardless of race or gender. I will be discussing with them how the precious water of this area can be put to best use to bring prosperity and dignity to our black brothers and sisters.

MONITORING OF WUA

I will also be discussing with them how we will monitor the progress of the water user association.

One of the important key performance indicators that my department will be monitoring will be the assistance provided by the water user association in the establishment of and support to emerging farmers from historically disadvantaged groups. We must ensure that our water resources and schemes benefit all the people of South Africa, not just a minority.

Deleted: ¶
When I signed the constitution of the Lower Olifants River Water User Association (LORWUA) I did not fully realise how serious people in this Vredendal area were about changing from the old establishment to the

Deleted: k

Deleted: new. I want to thank the Lower Olifants River Water User Association for running at such speed and for wanting to be at the forefront of transformation in this country. I hope that this commitment will greatly influence the lives of our people.¶

¶ The Vredendal scheme I am talking about refers to the Olifants River Government Water Scheme. Run-off from the Cederberg mountains is collected in the Clanwilli ... [1]

Deleted: This means th ... [2]

Deleted: The schedule ... [3]

Deleted: A

Deleted: a

Deleted: mounts to 9 4 ... [4]

Deleted: ¶ ... [5]

Deleted: as soon as

Deleted: transfer of staff

Deleted: has

Deleted: be

Deleted: en

Deleted: finalized as s ... [6]

Formatted

Formatted

Deleted: With responsi ... [7]

Deleted: i

Deleted: se Water ... [8]

Deleted: ???

Deleted: success of wa ... [9]

Deleted: I will request ... [10]

Deleted: of

Deleted: the

Deleted: make

Deleted: mo

Deleted: ve

Deleted: re accessible ... [11]

Deleted: 9¶

I will also be establishing an advisory committee to advise me on how best we can use government owned irrigation infrastructure to provide development opportunities for resource poor farmers and disadvantaged communities. I am convinced that, if we have the will, we can bring about remarkable change in our farming communities, to the benefit of all South Africans. I am also still in discussion with the Unions, reviewing the transfer of workers from my Department to Water User Association and the structure of these institutions.

Deleted:

Deleted: ¶

Deleted: The new South Africa has certainly brought about a platform for opportunities and rapid change for all of us. I want to thank you people for taking the courageous and bold step of wanting to bring about change in this area.¶

Formatted

Deleted: m

THE HISTORY OF EBENHAESER GOES BACK A LONG WAY

Let me turn to the Ebenhaeser community and the opening of the dam today. There has been considerable government assistance in this area, over the past century. Most recently, with the assistance of our partners at the Department of Agriculture and the West Coast District Municipality, to the amount of R 5,4 million have been made available by Government to enable the construction of the Ebenhaeser balancing dam. This dam with a capacity of 140 000 m³ will enable water that flows from the main canal to be stored during times of low demand and to be released during times of high demand. The water will be used to stabilise the supply and demand

Deleted: At this estuary the main settlement is the Ebenhaeser community. The first settlement was called Doornkraal and the chief was named Kees Louis. The actual right to the land was finally settled in 1837 When the Governor of the Cape Sir Benjami

Deleted: e

Deleted: n

Deleted: d

Deleted: D'urban ruled that 5270 morgen belonged to the mission. Since 1925 the Ebenhaeser community is supplied with water by my department. There should be no shortage of water to this community provided that the management of the distribution is maintained to strict standards.¶

¶
W

Deleted: I am pleased to announce that funds

Deleted: s

Deleted: 9¶

of 150 resource poor farmers. This in turn will enable the resource poor farmers to pursue their dreams of irrigating the full 300 morgen of land that the water is allocated for.

Deleted: the

Deleted: e

Deleted: M

Deleted: r

It should also be noted that the balancing dam will be used to stabilize the water supply to three commercial farmers as well as the Municipal water supply of Ebenhaeser. The operation of this dam now forms part of the larger scheme to ensure that all users, and especially the community of Ebenhaeser get their share of water at the right level of assurance of supply. In doing so, the community of Ebenhaeser as well as the commercial farmers benefiting from the dam will be joining hands in the spirit of co-operative water use.

Deleted: would

Deleted: same

Deleted: e

Ebenhaese and Matzikama Municipality are now part of one local authority. The water allocations are now pooled and must be managed for all parts of the municipality. We must strive for the same assurance of supply for good clean water at equal service standards to all consumers. With your contribution in payment of services, the municipality of Matzikama has an obligation to ensure that your services are also of a high standard.

Deleted: r

Deleted: ,

Deleted: having joined

Deleted: part

Deleted: of M

Deleted: is

Deleted: government

Deleted: Water use entitlements are now

Deleted: in one and

Deleted: 9%

I have also been informed that the Department of Agriculture has made funds amounting to R 800.000 available to repair and upgrade the Ebenhaeser canal system. With the repair of the Ebenhaeser canal and the construction of the balancing dam, plans to uplift this community have come one step closer.

Deleted: 2,2 million

Deleted: ,

Deleted: as soon as other factors such as land restitution and reclaim matters have been finalized

Deleted: s

I wish to thank you for your patience and courage to begin to change your lives to better yourselves. (Ek wil julle hartlik bedank vir julle geduld en moed om julle lewensomstandighede to verbeter.) I trust that my department will be with you to deliver all the necessary support you may require. (Ek vertrou dat my department julle sal bystaan om julle al die nodige bystand to gee wat julle benodig.)

Formatted

Formatted

Deleted: ¶

Thank you, Baie dankie

Formatted

Deleted: 9¶

new. I want to thank the Lower Olifants River Water User Association for running at such speed and for wanting to be at the forefront of transformation in this country. I hope that this commitment will greatly influence the lives of our people.

The Vredendal scheme I am talking about refers to the Olifants River Government Water Scheme. Run-off from the Cederberg mountains is collected in the Clanwilliam Dam and water is controlled and released systematically from the Bulshoek barrage into a gravity-driven canal system.

This means that water flows to Vredendal from Clanwilliam by its own steam without any pumping action along the way.

The scheduled irrigable area being supplied with water by this from Clanwilliam is 12 000 ha of which 9400 ha is scheduled area is irrigated from this canal system.

mounts to 9 400 ha, owned by approximately 200 farmers.

The Lower Olifants River Water User Association has the very important task of running the scheme. This makes it important that the

Page 6: [6] Deleted

Barbara Schreiner

18/11/2003 22:20:00

finalized as soon as possible. I need to bring to your attention that I will be meeting with the Water User Association Board after this ceremony. This is an indication of how Government will be bringing management of water resources closer to the people that we are serving.

Page 6: [7] Deleted

Barbara Schreiner

18/11/2003 22:25:00

With responsibility comes accountability. We don't only want Whites or Coloureds or Blacks in the

Page 6: [8] Deleted

Barbara Schreiner

18/11/2003 22:25:00

se Water Management teams. We must ensure that each group and user sector play an active role in water management. Again I wish to reiterate that we must all hold hands and work together so that water can be of benefit to us all.

This co-operation and integration of all groups must be monitored to ensure efficient and equitable use and management of our precious water resources and scheme assets. The use of business plans and other reports will be used to assess the

Page 6: [9] Deleted

Barbara Schreiner

18/11/2003 22:25:00

success of water management for all in this region.

Page 6: [10] Deleted

Barbara Schreiner

18/11/2003 22:26:00

I will request is the progress of water users associations to assist
with the

Page 6: [11] Deleted

Barbara Schreiner

18/11/2003 22:27:00

re accessible to these groups to ensure full integration of
resources.